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# Project business guidelines for accountants/CPAs

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Academic and Career Development Division

Junior Achievement

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**AICPA**

American  
Institute of  
Certified  
Public  
Accountants



Junior  
Achievement®

# **Project Business Guidelines for Accountants/CPAs**

A Cooperative Effort Between the American Institute  
of Certified Public Accountants and Junior Achievement

**Dear Project Business Volunteer:**

We would like to thank you for volunteering your time to serve as a Project Business classroom consultant. As a Junior Achievement volunteer and a representative of the accounting profession, you will be serving two key instructional roles. You will provide your students with information that will help them better understand how business and economics work in today's society, and you will create an awareness of different careers such as accounting. Because volunteers frequently incorporate many of their work experiences in the lesson plans, you can expect that your students will have many questions about accounting.

To assist you in your classroom instruction, Junior Achievement and the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) have combined efforts to prepare these guidelines, which are targeted to accounting professionals. The guidelines identify those lesson plans in the *Project Business Consultant Manual* that would be appropriate for an accountant or CPA to teach. Also included are the highlights of a recent AICPA/Gallup study that examines students' perceptions of and interest in accounting, and two student questionnaires to gauge your students' opinions of accounting in the first and last classes.

The AICPA believes it is important that students at an early age have an understanding of the accounting profession and are made aware of the exciting career opportunities accounting offers. Part of the AICPA's efforts has been to enhance relations with Junior Achievement by encouraging accounting professionals to participate in the Project Business program for middle school students. These guidelines are the result of this enhancement.

We hope you find these guidelines helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact your local Junior Achievement office or the AICPA if you have any questions about the lesson plans and/or guidelines.

**Sincerely,**



**Philip B. Chenok  
President,  
AICPA**

**Sincerely,**



**Karl Flemke  
President and CEO,  
Junior Achievement Inc.**

# PROJECT BUSINESS GUIDELINES FOR ACCOUNTANTS/CPAs

The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and Junior Achievement have established suggested guidelines for accountants/CPAs serving as Project Business volunteers. As an accounting professional, these guidelines will help you determine which activities (i.e., lesson plans) you may be best suited to teach during your 10 to 12 weeks as a classroom consultant. For further guidance, the AICPA will make available career information on accounting which you can distribute to your students. (To obtain AICPA career material, please turn to page 6 of this document.)

As a Project Business consultant, you are an important role model for the students. In fact, you may be the only business person many students are able to interact with on a regular basis. Also, in all probability you are the first “real-life” accountant or CPA that they have met. Initially, you may find that many of your students perceive accountants/CPAs as dull, numbers-oriented individuals who only do bookkeeping and prepare tax returns. Such perceptions were revealed in a study conducted in 1990–91 by the Gallup Organization for the AICPA. (The highlights from the study, *Accounting Recruiting Research: Survey of High School and College Students*, begins on page 7.)

Breaking down misconceptions of accountants/CPAs can be very simple, however. As your class gets to know you, they will realize that accounting professionals have diverse personality traits just like individuals in other professions. By creating an awareness of accountants/CPAs, you can dispel some of the negative perceptions of the profession and help the students better understand the role of accounting in our free enterprise economic system.

In the classroom, you will be asked to present a weekly activity relating business and economic concepts to the students’ personal experiences. This will require you to play several specific roles:

- ◆ **Business expert.** You will answer questions about how a business operates, relate economics and business concepts students can understand, and share your personal business expertise.
- ◆ **Experience resource.** You will have the opportunity to share your experiences in business, such as looking for a job, taking a risk, making a management decision, etc. You will also be able to help students understand how various businesses affect their lives.
- ◆ **Communicator.** You should stimulate student creativity by

- ◆ **Facilitator.** You will have the opportunity to lead discussions and activities to stimulate student interest in business and economics.
- ◆ **Career motivator.** You will have the opportunity to describe interesting career options in accounting. Many of the most successful activities in the *Consultant Manual* are designed to help students explore their career interests and educational opportunities.
- ◆ **Liaison to business.** You will be representing your firm/company, as well as your profession, in the classroom and school. Consequently, you will have the opportunity to describe the variety of ways your employer (and profession) contributes to the life of the community.

To enhance your efforts in reaching the students, you may want to consider using the following classroom techniques:

- ◆ **Show relevancy to students' lives.** Explain how the students are directly affected by what you are discussing. Junior high school students live in the present — they need specific examples that they can relate to. One example is to have the students prepare a personal budget based on a weekly allowance figure. Have them list items they typically buy (e.g., compact discs, sneakers); then have them plan and prioritize the purchase of these items.
- ◆ **Periodically separate students into groups.** Students' learning styles vary; many learn by sharing ideas with their peers. Working in groups or teams enables students to be competitive without threatening self-esteem. Healthy competition builds team spirit and serves as an incentive for learning. Also, don't be afraid of noise—kids get excited when they are learning.

Finally, as an accounting professional you will frequently bring “real-life” experiences into your lessons. Following are some ways you can do this while enhancing the image of accountants/CPAs:

- ◆ **Gauge students' opinions of accountants/CPAs.** Start the first class by asking the students about their perceptions of accountants/CPAs. Make copies of the questionnaires in this document, and have the students complete the questionnaires in both the first and the last classes. See if their perceptions have changed by the last class.

- ◆ **Share your accounting experiences with the class.** What drew *you* to pursue a career in accounting? Did you take any accounting courses in high school? What was your college accounting curriculum like? Did you take the CPA exam? What are some of the fun/interesting aspects of your career?
- ◆ **Focus on accounting as a service.** For example, discuss how accountants/CPAs help clients manage their businesses.
- ◆ **Discuss why money management is important.** Students should learn at an early age the importance of personal financial planning.
- ◆ **Discuss the relevancy of the accounting profession to the business world.** For example, discuss the role of accountants/CPAs with regard to the financial operations of a company or local government.
- ◆ **Focus on the community services accountants/CPAs provide.** example, during tax season many accountants/CPAs offer pro bono services to the poor and elderly.
- ◆ **Expose students to an ethical situation involving accounting.** You may be able to relate a personal experience from your job.

Junior Achievement's evaluation studies of Project Business indicate that you will be successful as long as you maintain open communication and build a working relationship with the classroom teacher, come to each class well prepared, and exhibit a high level of enthusiasm in your instruction. So relax, and enjoy getting to know the students!

## SUGGESTED LESSON PLANS

The following list of activities was selected from the *Project Business Consultant Manual*. A focus group of CPAs indicated that these lesson plans are not only effective in the classroom, but are easy to use for accounting professionals. This list contains 11 lesson plans and can be used as a reference or as a complete curriculum (the average Project Business consultant visits the classroom 10 to 12 times). In addition, the staff at your local Junior Achievement office is always available to answer any questions you may have.

### Unit II America's Economic System

#### **LESSON: THE CIRCULAR FLOW**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 62; Student Manual: Page 6)*

Playing the roles of consumers, business owners, and employees, students trace the flow of money, goods, services, and labor as they move through the economy.

#### **LESSON: BURGER BREAKDOWN**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 71; Student Manual: Page 7)*

Students discover the burger business is more than meat and buns. They examine property, pricing, competition, and profit in the free enterprise system.

### Unit III Enterprise In Action

#### **LESSON: TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 97; Student Manual: Page 15)*

Students use the seven M's of production to develop business plans for small companies they could operate. A business plan worksheet is included with this activity. This activity provides an opportunity for students to work in teams and use their imaginations. As an accounting professional, you may want to model this lesson plan based on an experience with a particular client.

### Unit IV Supply And Demand

#### **LESSON: SUPPLY, DEMAND, AND PRICE**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 129; Student Manual: Page 22)*

Students apply the laws of supply and demand in a variety of common economics scenarios. They also discover how changes in taste, technology, marketing strategies, and even the weather can impact supply, demand, and price. This activity is not technical; it provides an excellent introduction or review of supply and demand concepts.

## **Unit V    Personal Economics**

### **LESSON: WHAT ARE MY INTERESTS**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 137; Student Manual: Pages 23–25)*

This activity allows students to identify their skills and interests and understand how their strengths can be applied to a wide variety of occupations. As an accounting professional, you could discuss what your interests were when you were in school, and how these interests helped direct you into a career in accounting. This is a particularly good activity for first-time consultants.

### **LESSON: CAREER EVALUATIONS**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 140)*

Students play “What’s My Profession?” and evaluate a variety of careers in terms of potential income, education required, job satisfaction, stress, and other factors. This lesson plan will give you an opportunity to discuss the accounting profession from your perspective (e.g., your job responsibilities, growth opportunities). This activity will also help break down some of the stereotypes students have of accountants/CPAs.

### **LESSON: APPLYING FOR A JOB**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 143; Student Manual: Pages 24–26)*

Students examine their personal interests and skills to develop modified resumes and/or complete generic job applications. You should bring in sample job applications from your firm or company. This activity is particularly useful if your students will be looking for summer jobs.

### **LESSON: JOB SEEKING: THE WRONG AND THE RIGHT OF IT**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 145; Student Manual: Page 28)*

Students observe a dramatization of a poor job interview and develop a list of what to do and what not to do when interviewing for a job. Perhaps you can use your experiences when interviewing for accounting positions. Overall, many consultants have had great success with this activity.

### **LESSON: FAMILY FINANCIAL PLANNING**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 147; Student Manual: Page 29)*

This is one of the most eye-opening activities for Project Business students. They discuss the need for family budgets and develop budgets based on a particular income. As an accounting professional, you could discuss how an accountant/CPA would help a family with its budget. This activity would reflect on the role of accountants/CPAs in the community.



**LESSON: USING A BANK**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 151; Student Manual: Pages 30–33)*

Different types of banking institutions are discussed. Students review typical savings and checking services, open accounts, make deposits, and write checks. This activity is easy to use and very effective.

**LESSON: 1040EZ**

*(Consultant Manual: Page 153; Student Manual: Pages 34–35)*

Students complete an IRS form 1040EZ and discuss the equity of a progressive income tax. Your experience in the tax area should prove to be very helpful. You may want to consider conducting this activity during tax season, when it would be most relevant. Keep in mind, however, that this lesson could be difficult for some classes. It would be helpful if you brought in copies of actual tax forms for the students to use.

In addition to the 11 activities listed previously, many consultants have had success with an ongoing activity that allows students to follow the stock market. This activity simulates investing in the stock market, which helps students discover what it is and how it operates. By tracking the stock market over the 10- to 12-week period, the class has an excellent opportunity to discuss current events and a variety of national economic issues. A lesson plan with detailed instructions on how to get this activity rolling is on page 11 of the *Project Business Consultant Manual*.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Contact the AICPA if you would like to distribute career information on accounting to your students. Please note in your letter how many students will need materials. Send your letter to:

**John Daidone**  
**Manager — Academic & Career Development**  
**American Institute of CPAs**  
**1211 Avenue of the Americas**  
**New York, NY 10036–8775**

## **ACCOUNTING RECRUITING RESEARCH: SURVEY OF HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS**

A study conducted during 1991 by the Gallup Organization for the AICPA revealed a number of interesting observations made by high school and college students regarding college and career decisions, and, in particular, their perceptions of accounting as a career. The report, *Accounting Recruiting Research: Survey of High School and College Students*, is highlighted below.

### **► Perceptions of the Accounting Profession**

- More than half of both high school and college students surveyed said there is a difference between CPAs and accountants; among the more popular responses were that CPAs have more education/training and are licensed.
- While there is not one specific image of the type of person who is an accountant, many high school and college students used the terms “professional” and “intelligent” in their descriptions.
- A high percentage of high school and college students “strongly agreed” that being an accountant requires honesty, problem-solving abilities, and being numerically oriented. While a majority of high school students strongly agreed that working with people describes accounting (56%), only 37% of college students strongly agreed on this point.
- Although students’ knowledge of the work activities of accountants varied, many associated the profession with tax preparation and bookkeeping. Giving financial advice and advice on how to run a business did not get as many responses. Slightly less than two in five high school students (37%) and less than one in five college students (18%) could not provide an explanation of what accountants do.
- When asked to rate six professions (accounting, engineering, financial planning, law, medicine, and teaching) on a 10-point scale, accounting rated lowest overall among both high school and college students. The mean rating for accounting was somewhat better than average (slightly less than 6.0 on the scale).

### **► Interest in the Accounting Profession**

- Approximately one high school student in four (24%) and more than a third of the college students interviewed (39%) reported to have taken an accounting course. High achievers in college were less likely to have taken accounting courses than low and average achievers.

- More high school students reported to be interested in an accounting career than college students (42% high school students were very/fairly interested vs. 24% college students). High achievers in high school expressed less interest in an accounting career than their average and low counterparts. Also, more black college students (47%) and other minorities (37%) said they are very/fairly interested in an accounting career vs. white students (21%).
- Nearly one in five high school students (19%) reported they intend to major in a business-related area when they enter college, including 4% who said they would major in accounting. More whites (20%) and blacks (19%) than other minorities (11%) said they plan to major in a business-related area. Also, an intention to major in business was highest among students who took an accounting course in high school (38%).
- Slightly less than one in five college students (19%) reported having a business-related major, including 4% who are majoring in accounting. More males (22%) than females (16%) said they are currently majoring in a business-related area. High achievers (15%) and students from highly selective schools (12%) were less inclined to have a business major than their average and low counterparts (about one in five students).
- More than half of the college students (58%) majoring in business reported deciding on a major before entering college.
- Approximately one in 20 high school and college students expects to be an accountant by age 30.

### ► Influences in Selecting a College

- The majority of high school (71%) and college (66%) students said they made their decision to go to college prior to high school—in particular, high achievers and students from highly selective colleges.
- Parents were reported to be very influential in the students' decision to go to college; 68% of high school students and 63% of college students said their parents suggested that they attend college.
- The most common source of information for finding out about colleges was reported to be a college book, guide, or index, according to 81% of high school students. Less than half said they attended a college fair (40%) or used a computer program (23%).
- In choosing a college, many high school students considered the availability of specific courses or curriculum to be very important (72%). Black students placed greater impor-

tance on financial considerations (e.g., financial aid, college expenses) in comparison to whites and other minorities.

- Nine in 10 high school students cited the job training aspect of a college education as being very important.
- Less than two-thirds (63%) of high school students considered making more money to be a very important factor for going to college, although making more money rated very important with the low achievers (73%) vs. high achievers (52%).

### ► Influences in Choosing a Major/Career

- In choosing a major/career, high school students said they receive a lot of information from people they know who work in jobs they are interested in (44%), books and brochures (43%), and their parents (43%). College students cited their parents as being either very helpful (47%) or fairly helpful (34%) in the major/career decision-making process.
- Less than a third of high school students (30%) said they get a lot of major/career information from guidance counselors, while more than half of the college students said guidance counselors were not too helpful (22%) or not at all helpful (34%). Black students, however, were more likely than white students to find guidance counselors helpful.
- More than half of both the high school and college students said there have been teachers who have influenced their opinions concerning post-college plans.
- When asked to evaluate how “helpful” several items would be in deciding on a career, the highest-rated responses from both high school and college students were a description of the type of work involved, knowing how much education is needed to get a job, and the special skills needed. Male high school students were more inclined to rate information on starting salaries as being very helpful vs. females (55% to 46%).
- When asked to rate qualities important in choosing a career, working with people and knowing exactly what is expected of you in your work rated highest with both high school and college students, while prestige and geographic location were found to be the least important qualities.
- High school students (47%) were more likely to express an interest in continuing their education upon getting their undergraduate degree than college students (38%). A greater percentage of high achievers and students from highly selective schools said they plan to continue their education.
- A fifth year of college (e.g., the 150-hour education requirement for accounting students) would not affect high school or college students’ career choice.

## **QUESTIONNAIRES TO MEASURE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACCOUNTANTS/CPAs**

As an accounting professional serving as a Project Business consultant, you may very well be the first accountant/CPA your students have encountered. Some of the students may have preconceived notions of what accountants/CPAs do, look like, etc. In many cases, students get their perceptions of accountants/CPAs from the media, which often stereotypes these individuals as number crunchers who tend to work alone.

To better familiarize your students with what you do as an accounting professional, the AICPA and Junior Achievement request that you make copies of the questionnaires in this brochure and distribute them to your students during the first and the last classes. The concept behind surveying the students twice is to gauge whether their perceptions of accountants/CPAs have changed over the 10- to 12-week period.

The AICPA requests that you forward the questionnaires to the address below. Feel free to include any observations you made or experiences you encountered as a CPA classroom volunteer. Please send to:

**John Daidone**  
**Manager — Academic & Career Development**  
**American Institute of CPAs**  
**1211 Avenue of the Americas**  
**New York, NY 10036-8775**

Thank you for your assistance.

# Student Questionnaire/First Class

Your Project Business consultant is an accounting professional. He/she would like to know your perceptions of accountants or certified public accountants (CPAs). Please answer the questions below and hand in this form when complete.

Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

1. When you think of an accountant or CPA, what type of person comes to mind? (Please check all that apply.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> professional        | <input type="checkbox"/> intelligent                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> honest              | <input type="checkbox"/> problem-solving ability        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> well-paid           | <input type="checkbox"/> creative                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hard working        | <input type="checkbox"/> works long hours               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> likes math, numbers | <input type="checkbox"/> dull                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> works alone         | <input type="checkbox"/> does same duties over and over |

other \_\_\_\_\_

2. What kind of work does an accountant or CPA do? (Please check all that apply.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prepares taxes                        | <input type="checkbox"/> bookkeeping        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> handles the finances                  | <input type="checkbox"/> financial planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gives advice on how to run a business |   |

other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is there a difference between an accountant and a CPA?

- |                              |                             |                                     |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> don't know |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|

4. If you answered "yes" to question 3, please explain what you think the difference is.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you interested in a career as an accountant or CPA?

- |                              |                             |                                |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> yes | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> maybe |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|

## Student Questionnaire/Last Class

Your Project Business consultant would like to know your current perceptions of accountants or certified public accountants (CPAs). Please answer the questions below and hand in this form when complete.

**Name: (optional)** \_\_\_\_\_

1. When you think of an accountant or CPA, what type of person comes to mind? (Please check all that apply.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> professional        | <input type="checkbox"/> intelligent                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> honest              | <input type="checkbox"/> problem-solving ability        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> well-paid           | <input type="checkbox"/> creative                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hard working        | <input type="checkbox"/> works long hours               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> likes math, numbers | <input type="checkbox"/> dull                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> works alone         | <input type="checkbox"/> does same duties over and over |

other \_\_\_\_\_

2. What kind of work does an accountant or CPA do? (Please check all that apply.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prepares taxes                        | <input type="checkbox"/> bookkeeping        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> handles the finances                  | <input type="checkbox"/> financial planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gives advice on how to run a business |   |

other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Is there a difference between an accountant and a CPA?

- ☐ yes                      ☐ no                      ☐ maybe

4. If you answered "yes" to question 3, please explain what you think the difference is.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Are you interested in a career as an accountant or CPA?

- ☐ yes                      ☐ no                      ☐ maybe

If you answered "yes" or "maybe" to question 5, please fill in your address below so the AICPA can send you information on accounting careers.

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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